2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1930
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama



The latter's mother gets her married sisters and her brothers' wives to make a little mat enclosure, *khara oma*, inside at the back of the family hut, on the left hand side. This enclosure is a screened-off segment, measuring two to three feet across at its widest point, in the least regarded part of the hut; and it always has its own little opening leading out behind the hut. While it is being got ready the mother goes to fetch a woman who, though now past childbearing, has been reappointed for her former fertility. This woman takes the girl on her back (whence she is known by the name *abe xarib*), carries her into the *khara oma*, and cares for her while she is there. Should the period come on in the veld far from home, the girl's companions will on no account let her walk, lest all the roots and berries in her path scorch up, but will do their best to carry her home on their backs, taking turn and turn about.

Once in the *khara oma*, the girl must lie quite still, wrapped closely in her sheepskin kaross. The wind must on no account blow on her, nor must she be exposed to the sun. She may not leave her little hut except at night, and then it must be by the back opening, with one woman behind her and one in front to screen her from view. All the time she is thus secluded she must be careful not to touch cold water on any pretence whatever, nor may she speak above a whisper. It is said that if she talks aloud she will be a chatterbox and muddle in all sorts of affairs later, and will get a bad name among the people. The hearth fire in the outer hut is now also /*nau*, and nothing at all may be cooked at it, nor may any pregnant or menstruating or sterile woman come and sit by it, lest dire misfortune befall the girl. No man or boy, again, will come near her, for fear of dread consequences to himself. It is believed that should anyone infringe these or any of the other /*nau* restrictions during this time, some sort of sexual disease would beset him; and this could only be prevented from proving fatal if he were able to persuade the *abe xarib* (the old woman officiating) to inoculate him with her "essence" and so free him.

The girl, however, is visited by her older girl friends, who grind sweet-smelling leaves and bark into powder for her, with which she is copiously covered. The time of her seclusion is variously reported as from two or three days to a month. Some girls who had recently been through the rites said they had been secluded for a fortnight; and Mrs. Hoernlé is inclined to think that most probably the time was longer in days gone by, for one of the chief things required of the girl while in her little hut is that she should get fat, with a smoothly shining skin.

1 [The girl's mother. — Analyst]

2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1930
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama



Little Namaqua tribes, says that when a young Hottentot is "made a man" he is first cleansed with water, to do away with his "child" or "gumbeard dirt", next rubbed all over with fat, then urinated upon by the old men for three days in succession, after which he is cleansed with the blood of an animal specially killed for the purpose, and finally is again smeared with fat, while at the same time all his cattle are sprinkled with liquid fat. In another context our author states that the boy has also to provide a special meal in which only he and previously-initiated men may take part. This, of course, is the sacramental meal accompanying all these transition rites.[1] Hahn likewise testifies emphatically from his own observations among the Namaas that a youth upon being initiated is besprinkled with urine by the magician ("zauberdoctor"); but unfortunately he gives no further details at all about the ceremony.[2]

The fullest account we have of the boys' puberty rites among the Namaas is given by Olpp.[3] He states that there is no special time at which they have to be performed. An adolescent youth of any age can be subjected to them, the occasion apparently being determined primarily by the father and by the latter's ability to provide the necessary cattle for slaughter and milking. The boy is then placed under the care of an old man specially selected for this purpose, who naturally has himself long previously undergone the rites.[4] The latter at once proceeds to erect a small mat enclosure inside a bigger hut. Here he stays together with the boy as long as the period of seclusion lasts. The first act on the part of the boy is to clean himself by washing off all the ochre with which he has previously been smeared. Then one of the animals provided for slaughter is killed by the old man, cooked, and the meat shared between him and the boy. Campbell states that the fat of the animal is tied on the head and round the neck of the boy, where it must be worn until it rots and falls away.[5] This, however, is not mentioned by Olpp. The meal over, the old man blows ("blast") on the upper part of the boy's body, and immediately commences to instruct him in the rules of behaviour proper to a mature man.

These rules Olpp renders in the form of the following precepts:

[1] "Beitrge zur Kunde der Hottentotten," 103-4, 94.
[2] "Beiträge zur Kunde der Hottentotten," 8.
[3] "Aus dem Sagenschatze der Nama-Khoi-Khoin," 44-7.
[4] From a casual remark by Hahn (*Travels in Great Namaqualand*, 22) it is the magician (*gai-aob*) who has "to perform the rite of making a boy a man".
[5] *Travels in S. Africa*, 430.